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## ABSTRACT

A survey of the New York Department of Correctional Services Vocational Education Program was conducted in 53 correctional facilities throughout the state, with a questionnaire measuring perceptions of staff and inmates about the effectiveness of the program in the areas of work skills, technical skills, and student personal attributes relating to employability. Respondents included 430 educational supervisors and instructors as well as 389 randomly sampled inmates who were within 6 months of their release dates. The findings revealed that both inmates and staff thought that the program was useful in improving interpersonal skills as well as employment skills. They also generally agreed that the program was helpful in effectively preparing inmates for employment after release from prison. A significant proportion of both groups stated that more hands-on work and in-house projects were needed to better prepare inmates for employment. Respondents also noted the need to keep equipment and materials updated and the need for computer training. Instructors stated that more programming involving job-seeking skills as well as increased academics were needed. They also saw a need for better screening and placement procedures for inmates. The study concluded that the program should continue to be strengthened in the areas of computer repair, software, and computer literacy and that the employment success of former inmates who participated in the program should be studied. (KC)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM  
IN THE NYS DOCS  
1998

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# **PERCEPTIONS OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

## **Executive Summary**

A survey of the Department of Correctional Services Vocational Education Program was conducted in 53 correctional facilities throughout New York State. The questionnaire was designed to measure perceptions of staff and inmates regarding the effectiveness of the program. Respondents consisted of 430 educational supervisors and instructors as well as 389 randomly sampled inmates who were within six months of their release date. Ten percent of the inmate sample were women.

The survey measured the effectiveness of the program in regard to work skills, technical skills, and student personal attributes relating to employability. Inmate chances of obtaining successful employment once released into the community and the overall quality of specific programs based on inmate and staff perceptions were also measured. Also examined were the most positive components of the program as well as changes needed to improve the program, as perceived by the respondents.

Findings revealed that both inmates and staff thought that the program was useful in improving interpersonal skills as well as employment skills. They also generally agreed that the program was helpful in effectively preparing inmates for employment after release from prison.

A significant proportion of inmates as well as staff stated that more hands-on work and in-house projects were needed to better prepare inmates for employment. The need to keep equipment and materials updated was also highlighted by both staff and inmates. They saw the need, as well, for training in the computer field.

Instructors stated that more programming involving job seeking skills such as résumé writing and interviewing, as well as increased academics such as basic math and reading, were needed. They also saw a need for better screening and placement procedures for inmates. The inmates focused on making the program more career oriented and decreasing transfers out of shops before they had completed their training.

# **PERCEPTIONS OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

## **I. Introduction**

The mission of vocational education is to offer inmates a program that provides training that will enhance the occupational skills of participants. This training is seen as an opportunity for students to improve their employment potential and their ability to function in a noncriminal fashion. Instructors focus on providing students with the attitudes, knowledge, skills and credentials needed to contribute to facility maintenance or to work in the Department of Correctional Services Industry Program while incarcerated and, even more importantly, to secure employment when released back into the community.

A description and exploratory study of vocational programs in the New York State Department of Correctional Services was completed in May of 1997.<sup>1</sup> That study sought to answer the question: How does vocational education operate in the New York State Department of Correctional Services and does this program make a difference?

The report provided: (1) an overview of the Vocational Education Program in the Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) - its mission, objectives, target population, current available vocational trades, relationship to the academic education program, and impact on participants and the Department; (2) a brief description of a preliminary study of vocational job titles earned by students and its impact on recidivism; and (3) future plans for ways to measure the impact of the Vocational Education Program in the Department.

As a followup to that report, one of the plans for further study was to do a qualitative assessment of the experiences of vocational instructors and students. It was hoped that this investigation would give researchers and program staff a better understanding of the process of vocational education, how it is received by participants, and perhaps, how effective vocational education is in achieving its mission.

To that end, a questionnaire was sent to all vocational supervisors and instructors, and to a sample of students in vocational programs in January of 1998.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vocational Programs: Description and Exploratory Study. State of New York Department of Correctional Services, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> At any one time there are approximately 10,000 inmates participating in the vocational program. Therefore a random sample of inmates was taken. Those inmates participating in a vocational program who were within three months of their parole date were selected for the random sample. It was thought that inmates closer to parole would have participated longer in a vocational program. Approximately 30% of the male inmates in this category were selected. All female inmates in this category were selected because of the small number of females in the inmate population. Of the 389 in the sample, 38 (10%) were female, which is double their percentage in the total population.

## II. Description of Survey

Two versions of the survey were written - one for inmates and one for instructors and supervisors. The two versions consisted of similar questions regarding perceptions of the Vocational Education Program, but differed in regard to information particular to inmates and staff such as the types of jobs inmates expected to receive once released. For a copy of both staff and inmate surveys, see Appendix A.

There were 475 inmate surveys and 487 instructor/supervisor surveys sent to 53 facilities offering vocational services, for a total of 962 surveys. Three hundred eighty-nine (389) inmate surveys were returned (82%) and 430 instructor/supervisor surveys were returned (88%). Of this number, 47 were supervisors and 383 were instructors. For a breakdown of surveys by facility, see Appendix B.

## III. Description of Respondents

Inmate Respondents. Of the inmate participants, 90% were students; 7% aides; and 3% clerks in the vocational programs included in the study. Their average age was 32 years. The average length of time served in state prison was two years, five months. The median time was one year, seven months. The average length of time they had spent in their current vocational program was eight months, though the median time was only five months.

Twenty-six percent (26%) had a reading or math score below 5.0. Another 25% had both reading and math scores above 8.0. The others fell somewhere in between. Their average TABE grade equivalent reading score was 8.3; math was 6.9. Forty-one percent (41%) had acquired a GED (High School Equivalency diploma). The dominant language of 94% of the students was English; 5% were Spanish dominant.

Inmates surveyed were in 30 different vocational programs. The highest number were in Custodial Maintenance (55) and Horticulture/Agriculture (36). (See Appendix C for a complete list of vocational shops and the number of students in each shop.) These inmates reported that 53% of them had earned a total of 206 job titles in their current vocational program. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the men had earned at least one job title and 41% of the women had earned at least one job title in their current program. Appendix E shows the number of job titles earned.

Table I below gives a summary of demographics of inmates surveyed:

**Table I. Inmates: Number of responses and demographic data**

Inmates	Number of Responses
Students	350 (90%)
Aides	29 (7%)
Clerks	10 (3%)
TOTAL	389      351 men (90%); 38 women (10%)
Average Age: 32	
Average Time in Current Vocational Program: 8 months	
Average Time Incarcerated: 2 years, 5 months	
Number with degree (High School Equivalency or higher): 158 (41%)	
Average Read Score: 8.3 - Median Read Score: 8.4 (N=365)	
Average Math Score: 6.9 - Median Math Score: 6.4 (N=357)	
Number with one or more vocational job titles: 206 (53%)	

Staff Respondents. The length of time staff had taught in the vocational program ranged from 2 months to 32 years. The average length of time instructors had taught in the vocational education program was 11 years, while the average length of time instructors had taught at their current facility was 8 1/4 years.

The most common trades that respondents taught were Building Maintenance (42), Custodial Maintenance (40), and Electrical Trades (30). (See Appendix D for a complete list of trades with the number of instructors.) These statistics are described in Table II.

**Table II. Staff: Number of responses and average time worked**

Staff	Number of Responses	Average Time Worked
Supervisors	47 (11%)	10.5 Years
Instructors	383 (89%)	11 Years (8.25 yrs at current facility)
TOTAL	430	11 Years (From 2 months to 32 years)

#### **IV. Findings - Staff and Inmate Responses**

The inmate survey consisted of eight questions while the staff survey had six



questions. The survey questions, slightly rephrased, are written in *italics* in the report.

Two questions in the survey were asked of both staff and inmates. The first question asked respondents to rate *how they thought vocational training helped inmates* in seven different areas. The areas were:

- Teaches technical skills
- Teaches job readiness
- Provides opportunities for inmates to make use of their academic skills
- Helps build work skills
- Helps build interpersonal skills
- Helps build self-esteem
- Helps develop a cooperative spirit

Respondents could choose among four responses: Doesn't help, Helps a little, Helps somewhat, Helps a lot. In the following table, responses indicating that vocational training 'helps somewhat' or 'helps a lot' were combined as percentages of the total number of respondents who answered the question.

**Table III. In what ways do you feel vocational training is helpful to inmates?**

Ways it helps	Staff Response	Male Inmate Response	Female Inmate Response	Total Inmate Response
1) Teaches technical skills	422 (98%)*	334 (98%)	34 (94%)	368 (97%)
2) Teaches job readiness	409 (95%)	317 (95%)	36 (97%)	353 (95%)
3) Provides opportunity to use academic skills	385 (90%)	297 (89%)	34 (94%)	331 (89%)
4) Helps build work skills	405 (94%)	319 (93%)	36 (100%)	355 (94%)
5) Builds interpersonal skills	388 (90%)	311 (91%)	34 (97%)	345 (92%)
6) Helps build self-esteem	412 (96%)	303 (89%)	33 (94%)	336 (90%)
7) Helps build cooperative spirit	384 (90%)	305 (91%)	34 (97%)	339 (92%)

*\*Number saying it helps somewhat or helps a lot. Percents based on total responses to each question.*

All of the positive staff response rates were above 90%, showing that most instructors and supervisors perceive vocational training to increase inmate personal skills as well as work skills. Inmate responses were similarly positive, though they were less likely than staff to think that the program helps build self-esteem (90% vs. 96%). The table also shows that female students were generally more positive than male students in their evaluation of the

program except for the first statement, "teaches technical skills." Other ways vocational training helped that inmates listed were: better thinking skills, pride in self sufficiency, good use of idle time, and stress relief. The most frequent staff responses to other ways vocational training helped were: gives inmates confidence in themselves and pride in their work; gives them marketable skills; and reduces idle time.

The second question for both staff and inmates was to rate a series of statements having to do with *vocational training and employability*. The six statements were:

- Vocational training will help inmates get jobs in the community.
- Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the types of jobs inmates can apply for once in the community.
- Inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison.
- Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade.
- The majority of inmates participating in vocational programs receive enough training and experience to obtain a community job in a particular vocational trade.
- The 'live work' aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills.

The response choices were on a five point scale: strongly disagree, slightly disagree, not sure, somewhat agree, strongly agree. Table IV shows the number and percentage of staff and students who somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statements.

**Table IV. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

Statement	Staff Response	Male Inmate Response	Female Inmate Response	Total Inmate Response
1) Vocational training will help inmates get jobs in the community	345 (81%)*	290 (84%)	32 (89%)	322 (84%)
2) Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the jobs inmates can apply for in the community	391 (92%)	276 (81%)	28 (78%)	304 (80%)
3) Inmates who receive voc training are less likely to return to prison	336 (79%)	187 (54%)	15 (43%)	202 (53%)
4) Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade	300 (70%)	252 (73%)	28 (78%)	280 (73%)
5) The majority participating in voc programs receive enough training and experience	327 (77%)	274 (79%)	25 (69%)	299 (78%)
6) The 'live work' aspect of voc training is important for developing skills	417 (98%)	335 (96%)	35 (100%)	370 (97%)

\* No. saying they somewhat agree or strongly agree. Percent based on total responses to each question.



This table shows that there was more difference of opinion for this question than the previous one. Inmates were more positive regarding the first and fourth statements than staff. Both statements dealt with inmates getting jobs when released. The first statement, "vocational training will help inmates get jobs in the community," shows 81% of staff agreeing, while 84% of inmates agreed. The fourth statement, "inmates are likely to get a job in their trade," shows 70% of staff agreeing, but 73% of inmates agreeing.

The second and third statements show the staff more positive than inmates. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the staff responded that vocational offerings are appropriate for the jobs inmates can apply for in the community, while 80% of inmates responded positively to this statement.

The largest difference in responses was in the third statement: "inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison." While 79% of the staff agreed with this statement, only a little over half (54%) of the male inmates agreed and only 43% of the female inmates agreed. Perhaps these responses reflect the uncertainty of students regarding their fate upon release. Responses may also be based on experiences of inmates who have returned after being released. In looking at the latest admission information for the surveyed inmates, 71% (270) of them were new court commitments while 29% (111) were in for a second term. In a breakdown of responses by type of admission for this statement, it was seen that 57% of the 270 new court commitment inmates answered that they agreed with statement #3. But only 41% of the returnees agreed with the statement.

The statement that both staff and inmates agreed with almost unanimously was the importance of "live work" for developing skills. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the staff agreed with this statement while 96% of the male inmates agreed and 100% of the female inmates agreed.

Despite their uncertainty regarding the job market, 82% of the students responded positively when asked *if they were planning to look for a job in the DOCS vocational trade that they had been trained in upon return to the community*. When asked *what kind of job they wanted*, 71% of those responding listed one of the vocations taught at DOCS; 11% said sales or business; 6% listed counselor or teacher; and 4% said they wanted to go to school.

The trades taught by DOCS that were mentioned most frequently as the kind of job they wanted were construction/carpentry (N=24), custodial maintenance (N=20), computer field (N=16), electrical trades (N=14), auto repair/auto body (N=14), food service/cook (N=13), building maintenance/superintendent (N=11), sheet metal fabrication/welding (N=9), printing (N=8), and small engine repair (N=8).

When asked if it was *likely they would get the kind of job they wanted*, 95% said it was very likely or somewhat likely (53% said 'very likely' and 42% said 'somewhat likely'). Only 5% thought it was not very likely. Table V shows the percentages in each category:

**Table V. How likely is it that you will get the kind of job you want when you return to the community?**

Get kind of job you want	N=382
Very likely	53%
Somewhat likely	42%
Not very likely	5%

Students were asked: *Are there other vocational trades which you would like to be trained in that have not been available to you?* Fifty-four percent (54%) said yes; 41% said no; 5% did not respond. Of those who said yes, Table VI shows the most frequent trades listed:

**Table VI. Other trades you would like to be trained in**

Vocational Trade	Number of Responses
Computer Operator/Refurbishing	35
Welding	23
Auto Mechanics, Plumbing/Heating	17 each
Auto Body	14
Radio/TV Repair	12
Commercial Arts	12
Air Conditioning/Refrig.	11
Carpentry/Woodworking	10
Optical Technology	9
Food Service, Small Engine Repair, General Business	8 each
Electrical Trades, Masonry	7 each

When staff were asked *what other types of vocational training need to be offered*, their most frequent responses were: computer skills, automotive, painting, and welding.

Both staff and students were asked to list up to three *ways the vocational program could be improved*. Table VII lists the most frequent responses of students to this question.

**Table VII. In what ways can vocational training be improved to better serve your needs?**

Student Responses	Number of times mentioned	Percent of responses
Updated equipment and materials	92	23%
More classes, hours, not transferred out	88	22%
More career oriented, hands on, contact w/employers	79	20%
Does not need improvement	74	19%
Better teaching skills, variety in assignments	38	10%
Other: opp. to teach other inmates, voc jails like CASAT	13	3%
Better inmate screening	10	3%
TOTAL	394	100%

As shown above, students perceived that the most important need was the updating of materials and equipment. A significant proportion of inmates indicated that there should be an increase in the amount of computers and computer training available to inmates. They also saw a need to update teaching materials and equipment such as audio-visual aides and tools.

The second concern of students involved the need for more class time and a decrease of inmate transfers. Inmates indicated that they often were transferred out of their facilities before they had a chance to finish the specific trade they were learning, thus not being allowed to continue with the trade and earn job titles.

The third most frequently mentioned way to improve the program involved making it more career oriented. One student commented on ways the vocational program could be improved:

*"Allow trade business people and union stewards to come into the facility to talk about their trade; what education skills and abilities are required; what type of employment opportunities are available and approximate compensation for entry level employees. This would provide students with valuable information, motivation and possible employment contacts. ...and businesses and unions with first hand information about the NYS DOC vocational education programs."*

Seventy-four students (19% of the responses) said the program does not need improvement.

Thirty-eight responses were related to the need for better teaching skills and more variety in assignments, listing qualities such as patience, as well as skills that indicate a mentoring relationship, e.g., increasing self-esteem, confidence, and motivation. Other comments included: more videos, more individual instruction, help with basic skills, a more businesslike atmosphere, and more responsibility for the student.

Table VIII lists the number and percentages of staff responses to this question.

**Table VIII. In what ways can vocational programming be improved to better serve the needs of its students?**

Staff Responses	Number of times mentioned	Percent of responses
Update equipment and materials	102	23%
Inmate Screening/placement	83	19%
More community/live work	54	12%
Job placement service/check community needs	52	12%
Increase programming; more certificate programs	41	9%
Instructor Training/communication	37	8%
Decrease transfers	27	6%
Increase recognition of students	21	5%
Decrease class size	18	4%
Other: feedback from Parole, more Bilingual materials	12	3%
TOTAL	447	101%

Similar to inmate responses, 23% of instructor responses listed updated equipment and materials as the most needed improvement regarding the vocational program. Respondents stated that updated computers are needed, along with more programs designed to train inmates on computer programming, usage, and repair.

The next highest staff response related to better screening of inmates. Ten of the inmates surveyed also mentioned better screening as a way to improve the program.

There were many comments on the need for better screening of inmates, including:

- give instructors more freedom to remove students who do not want to be there
- increase academics of inmates

- put inmates in programs of interest to them
- prohibit use of voc as a dumping ground for inmates
- limit amount of times an inmate can re-enter a program after being removed

Fifty-four (54) staff respondents mentioned the need for more 'live work' programs; 52 said that a job placement service to place inmates into appropriate trades upon release is needed, to insure that inmates have the opportunity to utilize their training. Respondents also stated that the vocational program would benefit from classes designed to teach inmates appropriate job seeking and work skills. Most common responses included interview, resume writing, and job seeking skills. Other skills that staff saw a need for included learning responsibility, teamwork, and a work ethic.

An increase in programming and additional programs that include certification was mentioned 41 times by staff.

Instructor training and communication were concerns among instructors. Staff want more workshops and conferences so that they can learn up-to-date methods and have more opportunities to communicate with one another. They also want more computer training, more input into program development, and more recognition from Central Office.

Twenty-seven (27) staff respondents agreed with students that a decrease in inmate transfers is needed to insure that inmates receive the appropriate amount of training within their specific trade.

Other staff suggestions of ways to improve the program were:

- Inmates should pass a standardized test before program completion
- Decrease inmate 'callouts'
- More incentives and recognition for inmates
- All day enrollment
- Two-tier system: first basic, then advanced
- Vocational assessment shops to decrease turnover and better prepare students
- Give certificate without DOCS stamp

Students were asked about their *major concerns in finding employment when they leave*. They were able to list up to three responses. A total of 464 responses was categorized in the following table:

**Table IX. What are your major concerns about finding employment when you leave?**

Concern: Student Responses	Number of Times Mentioned	Percent of Responses
Felony Record	162	35%
Availability of Jobs	99	21%
No Concerns	58	13%
Attitude; Influence of Others	46	10%
Having up-to-date Skills	42	9%
Providing for Myself and Family	40	9%
Interview Skills	6	1%
Being on Parole	6	1%
Transportation, Driver's license	5	1%
TOTAL	464	100%

Not surprisingly, the major concern of students about finding employment is their felony record. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the responses involved some version of that concern. Following are excerpts from concerns listed:

*Company hiring a convicted felon - gap in resume - prejudice toward exconvicts - discrimination as an exoffender and minority - exoffender status will cause employers to overlook or underestimate my abilities, motivation and desire to be a sincere and productive worker - absence from the work force - having employers honor the voc training I've received - being accepted in my field - respected as competent worker - people looking at me as a bad person because I was in prison - fair chance - community acceptance.*

The next largest concern was availability of jobs, mentioned 99 times. These students were concerned about finding a job in the field in which they were trained; competition; being able to pay their bills; and job security.

Other concerns were:

- 46 concerned about their own attitude and being influenced by others.
- 42 concerned with having up-to-date skills, certification, and experience.
- 40 concerned about providing for their families.



Other concerns were interview skills, transportation problems, and being on parole. Fifty-eight (58) students said they had no concerns.

We asked the students what had been *the most positive influences of prison experience*, and gave them the opportunity to list three responses. Table X lists responses to this question.

**Table X. What have been the most positive influences of your Prison experience?**

Positive Influences: Student Responses	Number of Times Mentioned	Percent of Responses
Education Programs (vocational and academic)	155	31%
Learning Personal Characteristics	88	17%
Having good instructors, teachers, counselors	76	15%
Counseling Programs	60	12%
Broader view of world, seeing positive change	41	8%
Spiritual enlightenment, time to think	31	6%
Experience will keep me out of prison	17	3%
Connections with family, children	15	3%
All negative	14	3%
Library, Gym, Music Room	9	2%
TOTAL	506	100%

Vocational or academic programs were listed 155 times by students as being one of the most positive influences of their prison experience. Seventy-six (76) listed having a good instructor, counselor, or teacher. If we look at education in the broader sense, almost half (231 of 506=46%) of the responses involved the positive influence of teachers, instructors, vocational, and academic programs. Eighty-eight (88) responses involved the mention of personal characteristics they had learned while in prison as being a positive experience.

Inmates stated that learning good work habits and ethics, respect for others, teamwork, and responsibility were a part of their vocational and educational experience while in prison.

## **V. Discussion of Findings**

What are the implications of the findings of this survey? Perhaps it is safe to deduct from the survey that overall, the vocational program at DOCS is fulfilling its mission. While both vocational staff and students see ways that the program can be improved, the majority think that the training teaches productive job skills as well as the interpersonal skills needed to be successful in the work force.

In the area of employability of students there is more of an air of uncertainty. Though almost three-quarters of those surveyed agreed with the statements that students are being well prepared for the job market and are likely to get a job, there is a minority who doubt these statements. The greatest student uncertainty is shown in the statement that inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison. This response may reflect their knowledge of the many factors in addition to employment that influence an inmate's ability to succeed after prison. Almost half of the students expressed a concern that their felony record will be a hindrance in finding employment. This concern may have contributed to their uncertainty in this area. On the other hand, close to 80% of the staff agreed with the statement that students who receive vocational training are less likely to return.

The statement that emerged as having almost complete agreement of both staff and students was, "the 'live work' aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills." Their comments reflected the importance they attached to this aspect of vocational training. When asked how the vocational program could be improved, various aspects of hands-on work in order to provide more on-the-job training were the third highest response for both staff and students.

Training in the computer field was seen as an important need by both staff and students. Of students who responded with other vocational fields they would like to be trained in, the most frequent response was computer operator or computer refurbishing. The computer field was the second most popular after construction when asked what kind of job they hoped to get. The staff also pointed out the necessity of training for themselves in this new field.

## **VI. Conclusion and Next Steps**

The interest in computer vocations by both staff and students shows the need to continue the DOCS initiative of strengthening program in the areas of computer repair and computer literacy. Knowledge of various software programs such as word processing and spreadsheets, as well as the building of local area networks and computer programming, are all areas that were seen as valuable vocational skills. Staff as well as students see training in this field as a necessity for this program to move forward.

Over half of the inmate students listed at least one other trade that they wanted training in that was not available. Most of these trades are offered in various facilities, so the problem could have been a need for more sections of a shop at a particular facility, or other shops at that facility. Most facilities have vocational waiting lists, so inmates often are not able to be enrolled in the shop they request. This survey list of requested shops (Table VI), led by shops in the computer field, can assist administrators in planning future shops.

Surveyed students had been in their current shop for an average of eight months, with the median being five months. Only 53% of them reported earning one or more job titles in that shop. The subject of earned job titles is a complex area because of the large difference in various shops regarding level of difficulty. But the ability to earn job titles is directly related to having enough time to complete the tasks involved for each title. Since students listed the need for more class time and a decrease of transfers as their second highest concern on how the vocational program could be improved, an investigation of the issue of transfers before program completion may be in order. It would also be useful to get a better estimate from instructors of the average amount of time needed to earn titles for the various shops. With this information, expectations of earned job titles could be based on more realistic data.

The strong positive response to the statement regarding the importance of 'live work' for developing skills may point to the need for a review of this aspect of the vocational program. Is it being used to its fullest potential at all facilities? Is the 'live work' directly related to what the inmates are learning in their vocational shop? Do all students have the opportunity to participate in this aspect of the program? These are questions that could be addressed in a more thorough review of facility practices.

Finally, the uncertainty of students regarding their success in obtaining employment upon release demonstrates the need for more definitive followup studies of the employment records of inmates when released. Such studies could show both DOCS staff and students which vocational areas are most useful for successful employment of exoffenders. This data could be a valuable tool in planning for future vocational programs.

A quote from one of the surveyed students shows the importance of striving to continually improve the vocational program at DOCS:

*I learned respect for human life... That freedom is a gift ... That I was able to get my GED and be trained in certain fields that will enable me in the future to not turn to crime again in life.*

The results of this survey will give program staff and researchers further direction to this end.

## Appendix A. Copy of staff and inmate surveys

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Vocational Educational Study: Staff Survey***

*NYS Department of Correctional Services  
1997*

*The following questions ask you about your perceptions of vocational education at the New York State Department of Correctional Services. Your answers can help the Department learn more about the actual workings of vocational programs in facilities, and help develop new ideas for improvements of these programs. Your answers are greatly appreciated. All responses will be kept confidential.*

- (1) (a) How long have you been a vocational education instructor? \_\_\_\_\_ years  
 (b) How long have you been a vocational instructor at the current facility? \_\_\_\_\_ years
- (2) (a) Which vocational subject(s) do you *currently* teach? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) Please list any other vocational subjects you have taught in the past.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- (3) In what ways do you feel vocational training helps inmates at DOCS? (*Circle answer*)

<i>Vocational training ...</i>	<i>Doesn't Help</i>	<i>Helps a little</i>	<i>Helps Somewhat</i>	<i>Helps A lot</i>
(a) ...teaches technical skills	1	2	3	4
(b) ...teaches job readiness	1	2	3	4
(c) .provides an opportunity for inmates to make use of their academic skills (e.g. math, reading, etc)		2	3	4
(d) ...helps build work skills (e.g. conscientiousness, work ethic, professionalism, pride in job, good work habits, punctuality, responsibility)	1	2	3	4
(e) ...builds interpersonal skills (e.g. communication skills, respect for co-workers, etc.)	1	2	3	4
(f) ...helps build self-esteem	1	2	3	4
(g) ...helps develop a cooperative spirit	1	2	3	4
(h) Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) _____	1	2	3	4

(4) How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements about vocational training at DOCS?

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
(a) Vocational training helps inmates get jobs in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the types of jobs inmates can apply for once they are in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) Inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison	1	2	3	4	5
(d) Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade.	1	2	3	4	5
(e) The majority of inmates participating in vocational programs receive enough training and experience to obtain a community job in a particular vocational trade.	1	2	3	4	5
(f) The "live work" aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills.	1	2	3	4	5

(5) Are there other types of vocational training that you think need to be offered to inmates?

\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_ No

(Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

(6) In what ways can vocational programming be improved to better serve the needs of its students?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY.*

*(Return to Ann Brandon, DOCS Education Unit, Building 2, Albany, N.Y.)*

DIN: \_\_\_\_\_

Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Vocational Educational Study: Inmate Survey***

*NYS Department of Correctional Services  
1997*

The following questions ask you about your perceptions of vocational education in New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) facilities. Your answers can help DOCS learn more about the actual workings of vocational programs, and help develop new ideas for improvements of these programs. Your answers are greatly appreciated. All responses will be kept confidential.

- (1) (a) Which vocational program are you *currently* participating in? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) How many job titles have you earned in this vocational program? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (c) How long have you been in this program? (months) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (d) Are you a student \_\_\_\_\_, aide \_\_\_\_\_, or clerk \_\_\_\_\_?
- (2) (a) Please check off from the list below the vocational trades you have had training in while at DOCS.  
 (b) Indicate the number of titles you have earned in each trade.  
 (c) Also, indicate if you have had additional training in a particular vocational area other than from DOCS.

(a) <i>Vocational Trade</i>		(b) # of Earned Titles			(c) <i>Prior Training Outside of DOCS</i>	
					None	
<i>Some</i>	<i>A Lot</i>					
_____	Agriculture/Horticulture	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Air Cond./Refrigeration	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Appliance Repair	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Auto Body	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Auto Mechanics	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Auto Transmission	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Barbering/Beauty Culture	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Building Maintenance	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Cabinet Making	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Carpentry	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Commercial Arts	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Computer Operator	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Computer Refurbishing	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Cosmetology	_____	1	2	3	
_____	CSET / TV	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Custodial Maintenance	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Data Processing	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Dental Technician	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Diesel	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Drafting	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Electrical Trades	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Electronics Repair	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Floor Covering	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Food Service	_____	1	2	3	
_____	General Business	_____	1	2	3	
_____	Horse Handling & Care	_____	1	2	3	



(a) *Vocational Trade*

(b) *# of Earned Titles* (c) *Prior Training Outside of DOCS*  
*None*

*Some A Lot*

_____ Laundry	_____	1	2	3
_____ Machine Shop	_____	1	2	3
_____ Masonry	_____	1	2	3
_____ Office Machine Repair	_____	1	2	3
_____ Oil Burner Repair	_____	1	2	3
_____ Optical Technician	_____	1	2	3
_____ Painting	_____	1	2	3
_____ Plumbing & Heating	_____	1	2	3
_____ Printing	_____	1	2	3
_____ Radio/TV Repair	_____	1	2	3
_____ Sewing Machine Repair	_____	1	2	3
_____ Sheet Metal Fabrication	_____	1	2	3
_____ Shoe Repair	_____	1	2	3
_____ Small Engine Repair	_____	1	2	3
_____ Tailoring and Sewing	_____	1	2	3
_____ Upholstery	_____	1	2	3
_____ Welding	_____	1	2	3

*Industries Program(s) (Specify)*

_____	_____	1	2	3
_____	_____	1	2	3

*Other Programs not mentioned:  
(Specify)*

_____	_____	1	2	3
_____	_____	1	2	3

(3) (a) Are there other vocational trades which you would like to be trained in that have not been available to you? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

(b) (If YES) Which programs are these? \_\_\_\_\_

(4) In what ways do you feel vocational training is helpful to you? (Circle answer)

<i>Vocational training ...</i>	<i>Doesn't Help</i>	<i>Helps a little</i>	<i>Helps Somewhat</i>	<i>Helps A lot</i>
(a) ...teaches technical skills	1	2	3	4
(b) ...teaches job readiness	1	2	3	4
(c) ...provides an opportunity to make use of my academic skills (e.g. math, reading, etc)	1	2	3	4

<i>Vocational training ...</i>	<i>Doesn't Help</i>	<i>Helps a little</i>	<i>Helps Somewhat</i>	<i>Helps A lot</i>
(d) ...helps build work skills (e.g. conscientiousness, work ethic, professionalism, pride in job, good work habits, punctuality, responsibility)	1	2	3	4
(e) ...builds interpersonal skills (e.g. communication skills, respect for co-workers, etc.)	1	2	3	4
(f) ...helps build self-esteem	1	2	3	4
(g) ...helps develop a cooperative spirit	1	2	3	4
(h) Other: _____	1	2	3	4

(5) How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements about vocational training at DOCS?

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
(a) Vocational training will help in- mates get jobs in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
(b) Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the types of jobs inmates can apply for once in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
(c) Inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison.	1	2	3	4	5
(d) Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade.	1	2	3	4	5
(e) The majority of inmates participating in vocational programs receive enough training and experience to obtain a community job in a particular vocational trade.	1	2	3	4	5
(f) The "live work" aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills.	1	2	3	4	5

(6) (a) Do you plan to look for a job in the DOCS vocational trade that you have been trained in when you return to the community?      \_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

**(6)(b) (If NO) What kind of job would you like to get when you return to the community?**

---

**(c) How likely is it that you will get the kind of job you want when you return to the community?**

- 1 Not Very Likely**
- 2 Somewhat Likely**
- 3 Very Likely**

**(7) What are your major concerns about finding employment when you leave?**

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---

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**(8) In what ways can vocational training be improved to better serve your needs?**

---

---

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**(9) What have been the most positive influences of your prison experience?**

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***THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY.***

# Appendix B. Survey Responses

## Surveys Sent

## Surveys Returned

Facility (f)=female	Sups.	Instructors	Students	Total	Sups.	Instructors	Students	Total
Adirondack	1	8	15	24	1	8	11	20
Albion (f)	1	7	24	32	1	4	18	23
Altona	1	10	5	16	1	10	5	16
Arthurkill	1	1	4	6	1	1	3	5
Attica	1	8	6	15	1	5	2	8
Auburn	1	8	2	11	1	7		8
Bare Hill	1	16	21	38	1	14	20	35
Bayview (f)		1	3	4		1	3	4
Beacon (f)	1	1	6	8	1	1	6	8
Bedford Hills (f)	1	5	13	19	1	4	10	15
Camp Gabriels	1	2	2	5	1	1	2	4
Camp Georgetown	1	1	2	4	1	1	1	3
Camp Pharsalia	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3
Cape Vincent	1	10	13	24	1	10	13	24
Cayuga	1	14	23	38	1	12	15	28
Clintons	1	11	9	21	1	11	4	16
Collins	1	12	12	25	1	10	11	22
Coxsackie	1	9	6	16	1	9	5	15
Downstate		1	0	1				0
Eastern	1	7	0	8	1	4		5
Elmira	1	10	4	15	1	9	2	12
Fishkill	1	10	5	16	1	10	5	16
Franklin	1	18	18	37	1	17	14	32
Green Haven	1	10	2	13	1	11	2	14
Great Meadow	1	7	5	13	1	7	2	10
Gouverneur	1	10	12	23	1	7	10	18
Gowanda	1	14	7	22	1	10	7	18
Greene	1	18	23	42	1	12	19	32
Groveland	1	19	28	48	1	16	24	41
Hudson	1	4	8	13	1	4	7	12
Lakeview	1	7	0	8	1	7	0	8
Livingston	1	3	3	7	1	3	3	7
Lyon Mt.	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3
Marcy	1	12	15	28	1	11	13	25
Mt. McGregor	1	5	0	6	1	5	0	6
Midstate		12	15	27		12	15	27
Midorange	1	7	5	13		5	5	10
Mohawk	1	7	9	17	1	7	8	16
Ogdensburg	1	13	25	39	1	12	23	36
Oneida	1	8	6	15	1	6	6	13
Orleans	1	17	24	42	1	16	21	38
Otisville	1	6	6	13	1	4	5	10
Riverview	1	15	21	37	1	15	18	34
Shawangunk	1	5	3	9	1	5	3	9
Sing Sing	1	7	3	11	1	6	2	9
Sullivan	1	4	3	8	1	4	2	7
Taconic (f)	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3
Wallkill	1	3	4	8	1	3	4	8
Washington	1	14	15	30	1	12	10	23
Watertown	1	8	11	20	1	7	10	18
Wende		2	0	2				0
Woodbourne	1	10	6	17	1	7	4	12
Wyoming	1	18	20	39		17	13	30
TOTAL	49	438	475	962	47	383	389	819

### Appendix C. Number of Student Respondents by Trade Area

TRADE AREA	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Custodial Maintenance	53	2	55
Horticulture/Agricultural	26	10	36
Building Maintenance	31	2	33
Electrical Trades	28	4	32
Small Engine Repair	32		32
General Business	22	9	31
Printing	23	4	27
Masonry	18		18
Welding	17		17
Floor Covering	14		14
Drafting	12		12
Air Conditioning/Refrig.	12		12
Commercial Arts	8		8
Computer Operator	8		8
Computer Refurbishing	8		8
Plumbing/Heating	7		7
Barber and Beauty	6		6
Cosmetology		6	6
Electronic Repair	5		5
Radio/T.V. Repair	4		4
Auto Body	3		3
Carpentry/Woodwork	3		3
Food Service	3		3
Appliance Repair	3		3
Auto Mechanics	1		1
Office Machine Repair	1		1
Painting	1		1
Upholstery	1		1
Pre-Voc. Shop Gen.	1		1
Horse Farm	1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>389</b>

### Appendix D. Number of Instructors by Trade Area

TRADE AREA	NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS
Building Maintenance	42
Custodial Maintenance	40
Electrical Trades	30
Small Engine Repair	28
General Business	28
Horticulture/Agricultural	27
Welding	24
Floor Covering	20
Masonry	18
Printing	17
Drafting	12
Computer Refurbishing	12
Plumbing/Heating	10
Air Conditioning/Refrig.	9
Barber and Beauty	7
Commercial Arts	7
Auto Mechanics	5
Cabinet/Millwork	5
Electronic Repair	5
Radio/T.V. Repair	4
Food Service	4
Upholstery	4
Auto Body	3
Appliance Repair	3
Computer Operator	3
Carpentry/Woodwork	2
Cosmetology	2
Pre-Voc, Shop Gen.	2
Machine Shop	1
Painting	1
Tailor & Sewing	1
Mechanic Drawing	1
Sheltered Workshop	1
Horse Farm	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>379</b>



**APPENDIX E. Number of Job Titles Earned in Current Shop**

<b>No. of Titles Earned</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	51	8	59
2	49	2	51
3	32	2	34
4	22		22
5	14		14
6	13	2	15
7	6		6
8	6		6
9+		1	1
None	159	22	181
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>389</b>

*Prepared by:*

*Ann Brandon  
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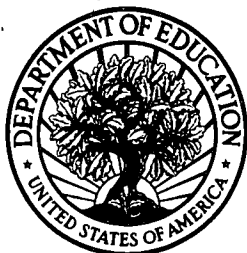
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*September 1998*



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